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ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Dr. Sampurnanand

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FOREWORD

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Dr. Sampurnanand (interviewee), recorded by

Dr. Hari Dev Sharma (interviewer), date, page,
Nehru Memorial Museum & Library,
Oral History Project.

BIO-DATA

1890

Sampurnanand, Dr.; B.1 Jan. 1892 Banaras; educ. Banaras and Allahabad; Member, A.I.C.C. since 1922; thrice Secretary, U.P.P.C.C.; President, first All-India Congress Socialist Conference, Bombay (1934); Minister for Education, U.P. Government (1938-39); participated in the Quit India movement; was Chief Minister of U.P. and Governor of Rajasthan for several years; died 1969.

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Main points covered in the interview

Influences on Sampurnanand; impressions of Banaras Congress (1905); experiences as a teacher; Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Indore and Gandhi; princely rule in Bikaner; on his book Dharmvir Gandhi (1914) and other writings; Gandhi and Khilafat; boycott of Prince of Wales' visit to Banaras and subsequent arrest (Dec. 1921); education at Kashi Vidyapith and at government institutions; Simon Commission at Banaras; Non-cooperation (1921) and Civil Disobedience (1930) movements compared; participation of Muslims and women; Kashi Vidyapith and movements (1921 and 1930); Sampurnanand's trials (1921 and 1930); on socialism and socialist group in U.P.; Congress Socialist Party (1934); Jayaprakash Narayan; Narendra Deva; Gandhi on socialism and the C.S.P.; Nehru and the C.S.P.; formation of Congress ministry in U.P. (1937) and Muslim League; Sampurnanand's work as Education Minister (1937-39); Quit India movement; Indian National Army's impact on transfer of power; C.S.P. and Subhas Chandra Bose's second election for the Congress Presidentship; Congress ministry (1937-39) and the civil servant; Partition.

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Oral History Interview
with
Dr. Sampurnanand
Varanasi
19 December, 1967
by
Dr. Hari Dev Sharma
for The Nehru Memorial Museum & Library

Dr. Hari Dev Sharma: Dr. Sampurnanand, could you begin this interview with a brief account of your early life? What were the early influences on you?

Dr. Sampurnanand: Well, you see, my early life was more or less that of an average member of a lower middle-class family, and I do not know whether there was anything particular about it. As regards the other question about early influences, that is interesting in a way. I was very much under the influence of a number of books, particularly translations of Bengali books like Rajput Jeevan Sandhya, Maharaj Jeevan Prabhat and Durgesh Nandini. These are all, as you know, the works of very important Bengali writers and like a number of other young men of my age, I came very much under their influence. As you know, they are generally about the fights that took place between the Muslim invaders and the Rajputs. They give very good descriptions of Rajput chivalry, Rajput courage, devotion, love of country, self-sacrifice and all that. Like so many other young men of my time, I came very much under their influence. Sometimes there were, I might say, comic results which these influences produced. For instance, I read in those books stories of bravery, chivalry, courage and so on. Our family possessed an old

sword. We still possess it. Very often, I used to practise on that sword, out up pieces of loose strings, for instance, that I found hanging in the room, so much so that my father felt afraid of me. There is a park in Varanasi, Victoria Park, and it was rumoured that a number of spies from Bengal came to that park to know about the young men who would come there. And I was prohibited from going to that park, lest I should fall into the hands of one of those spies.

Another book that very much influenced me was Abbot's <u>Life of Napoleon</u>. I still remember the influence which it had on me. There were a number of friends of mine, Bengalis all of them, who had a sort of secret club and they used to go there. Sometimes they used to take me there but somehow I noticed that in spite of the fact that we were very good friends and they often took me there, I was somehow debarred from their most secret meetings, either because I was not a Bengali or they were not sure of me. Whatever it was, I felt that there was some kind of a bar which stood between me and them.

<u>Sharma</u>: The books you have mentioned are largely fictions. Could you tell us whether there were other books on politics and economics which showed the bad effects of the British rule on India? What were those books?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Yes, there were a number of books. There was Dadabhai Naoroji's book <u>Poverty and Un-British Rule</u>

in India, for instance. Then there were other books: books by R.C. Dutt and one or two other authors. I forget the name of the author, the Irish gentleman who was a Commissioner or a Collector somewhere in Bengal.

Sharma: Digby?

Sampurnanand: Digby. I forget the name; but it very much impressed me at that time. But the most impressive in size as well as in other ways was Dadabhai Naoroji's book Poverty and Un-British Rule in India. The other books were of that kind.

Sharma: Could you also tell us who were the leaders in the Congress who attracted you most?

Sampurnanand: Well, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lajpat Rai.

Sharma: Tilak's influence was there.

Sampurnanand: Yes, that also was there. It became specially strong after I first saw him at the Banaras Congress.

Sharma: Could you give us some of your impressions of the Banaras Congress?

Sampurnanand: Well, a fewof those who used to impress me most were Surendranath Banerjea, Lala Lajpat Rai and to some extent Malaviyaji also. But I was a school student at that time and I can hardly give you much of what might be called worthwhile predilections of those days. It was some thing entirely new. That is all that I could say.

Sharma: Where was this Congress held in Banaras?

Sampurnanand: You have probably seen here Kashi station. It is in the Fort area.

Sharma: After finishing your education what job did you take up?

Sampurnanand: I became a school master. I was a teacher in London Mission School, Banaras.

Sharma: Did the teachers in the Mission School display any hostility towards Indian aspirations.

Sampurnanand: No. In fact, the two topmost men were Bengalis and they, as good nationalists, were very much sympathetic towards the Indian aspirations, as people like me were, for instance, whatever I was worth.

Sharma: Was there any bar on joining the Christian school?

Sampurnanand: I was not a Christian. It was in the peculiar circumstances that I joined the school. A few years earlier, Lala Lajpat Rai had been deported. I was at the house of a relation where a girl's marriage was to take place. Then suddenly a friend, who had been to the Chowk and dropped in at the Carmichael Library, happened to see some newspaper there where he read the news of the deportation. He came and brought the news. We did not fully understand

the implication of this word 'deportation' and so on. Anyway, we learnt that he had been sent out of India by the government and then and there on the spur of the moment, without fully understanding what I was doing and what I was doing it for, I came to the conclusion that whatever I might do, I would not serve the British government later on, when the time would come for me to do anything. When I passed my B.Sc., that old resolution came to my mind and I had to do something to implement it. My family was a family of government servants. My father was in the good books of the district officers and he was hoping that he would be able to secure a good job for me. I had made up my mind not to enter government service and, therefore, I was of the mind that I should do something to checkmate my father's efforts to do something which would commit me so that I would not be able to join the government service. Then there was a friend of mine who was in the London Mission School. He was able to secure some place in government service but the Mission authorities said that they would let him go if he would let them have a substitute. He happened to know that I had passed the B.Sc. and that I might possibly accept this thing and fulfil my own resolution. So he came to me. I went and took up this job and jumped at the idea so that I might be in service somewhere and that my father would not be able to thrust me into government service. That is how I joined the school.

Sharma: For how many years were you in this School?

Sampurnanand: One year.

Sharma: After that?

Sampurnanand: In Prem Mahavidyalaya, Vrindaban.

Sharma: What was the attraction for you to go to Vrindaban?

Sampurnanand: Nothing particularly. It was a new place and a new kind of an institution. One of my relations - he was in government service, a Deputy Collector-had taken a couple of months leave, I think, just for going about the country and also because of his health and so on. So,he was in Vrindaban. He had seen the institution and he talked to me in very high terms about this school. So,the idea attracted me.

Sharma: This was in the year 1910.

Sampurnanand: 1910, I think so.

Sharma: Before that,did you hear about Raja Mahendra Pratap?

Sampurnanand: No, nothing.

Sharma: Could you give us some of your reminiscences of this school, it was an institution with new ideals.

Sampurnanand: It was a very good institution and Raja Mahendra Pratap was a very good friend. In fact, he had

decided to send me abroad. He made the offer to me but I was a very orthodox Hindu in those days and I was not prepared to cross the sea and go abroad and, therefore, I refused the offer. Later on, I was sorry for what I had done. But at that time I was like that.

Sharma: What really was the difference between the education given in the Prem Mahavidyalaya and in other schools?

Sampurnanand: One very obvious difference, of course, was that the teaching was mostly in Hindi. That was one great thing. The class books were more or less very much the same. In any case, the general approach was; anybody would hardly speak about the Congress but everybody was a nationalist; there is no doubt about that. It was the general atmosphere of the place which was so entirely different.

Sharma: English at that time formed a part of the curriculum?

Sampurnanand: Yes, it did.

Sharma: Don't you think that the technical education given there was also a distinctive feature of it?

Sampurnanand: It was not of such a very high order as many of us found it in those days. As compared to the kind of technical education which is now given in schools, it was very elementary. Anyway, it was a new departure, of course.

Sharma: For how many years did you serve there?

Sampurnanand: Again one year.

Sharma: After that you again came to Harish Chandra School?

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: For how long did you stay there?

Sampurnanand: One year again.

Sharma: What were the reasons for your changing schools?

Sampurnanand: Nothing, simply the lure of new place, that is all. Nothing else.

Sharma: And after serving in the Harish Chandra School, what did you do?

Sampurnanand: I went to the training college, Allahabad.

Sharma: And after that you went to Indore?

Sampurnanand: Yes, that is right.

Sharma: Could you tell us what were the chief features of Daly College?

Sampurnanand: You see, there were so many features of Daly College. In the first place, it was an institution which had the characteristics of English public schools. I had not

been to any public school. So I could not say exactly whether it is correct or not. I should say it is more or less. The number of teachers was seventeen at the time and I think the number of students was fifty-two just three times the number of teachers. That, of course, was something interesting. There were, including the Principal, four Europeans. Though nothing was said exactly in these terms, quite obviously the position of the English teachers was superior to that of Indian teachers. In fact, there were two different cadres altogether; European teachers and Indian teachers. Then, of course, English was the medium of instruction and we went to ridiculous lengths in sticking to English. For instance, if you like, I can give you an instance of how I won the esteem of Principal Mr. Hide. Three new teachers had joined, including me. The classes had not yet started. Mr. Hide, the Principal, called all three of us together and somehow the word 'door' came into his head and he asked us how the word 'door' was to be explained to the students. As a matter of fact, any one who knows anything about teaching methods knows very well that such words should not be explained. You simply show the door. That is all. A teacher is not expected to be a dictionary. Anyway, Mr. Hide had old ways, absurd ways and he asked, "How a door is to be explained." None of the two other friends who had joined that very day could explain the word. I did. I made an attempt which was very successful in the eyes of

Mr. Hide and at once I won his esteem. I said, xAxdoorxisx xxxx - I still remember my achievement - 'a door is anything with the help of which you open and shut a doorway. A doorway being a hole in a wall which is one of the four boundaries of a room.' It is absolutely silly but Mr. Hide liked it very much and I won his esteem. And I still remember that foolish achievement of mine. For instance, even the lowest class students were expected to speak in English. Then one of the students explained the word 'read'. He was asked to explain the word 'read'. That also was a silly thing. A boy should never be asked to explain such words. Anyway, he did. "To look at a sign and to make a sound for which the sign stands." That was a silly expression but that passed. So that was the extent to which we went in following English. There were religious classes also for both Hindus and Muslims.

Sharma: There were two separate sections for the Hindus and the Muslims?

Sampurnanand: Only for religious classes. There was a Hindu Pandit and a Maulvi.

Sharma: One of the features of the Daly College was that the princes who were having their education there, were expected to come in an Indian dress.

Sampurnanand: In the classes, yes, not on the games fields.

Sharma: What was the reason for this when the Principal was a European?

Sampurnanand: Well, I can not tell you. It had come down to us for very long. There were other things also which were really humiliating. For instance, when a student came to the teachers' room for any purpose, he had to take off his shoes outside the room. It was very humiliating but there it was.

Sharma: And, in Indore at the time when you were teaching, what was the state of political consciousness among the people of Indore?

Sampurnanand: Well, if there was any consciousness, it did not come to light.

Sharma: Were there no meetings?

Sampurnanand: No. At least I never saw any public meeting, except a session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.

Sharma: Gandhiji was the President of this session. Could you give us some of your impressions of this?

Sampurnanand: Well, I think it was a very successful session. There was a very good exhibition of Hindi books. I was the President of this Exhibition Sub-Committee. Indore State also cooperated. Maharaj Kumar of Indore attended the session on his father's behalf. What else can I tell?

Sharma: Was Gandhiji as popular at that time as he subsequently became?

Sampurnanand: It depends upon the timings. He was as popular as he was expected to be. There was not much of

any political consciousness to speak of but in the non-political atmosphere- that necessarily prevailed at the time - he was very popular. And, at least, with his way of life, without referring to what he said, he left a deep impact on us. For instance, there was a meeting held early in the morning. It was sponsored by some private body and Mahatmaji was to speak on the Gita. I think the time was 7 O'clock. He went there exactly at seven. I believe the number of people who were present in the audience was seven or eight only. Some people said that we should wait for some time. He said, 'I am not going to wait. If anybody cares to listen to me, let him come now', and he began exactly at seven.

Sharma: This incidently brings me to the point whether you remember the discourse on the Gita that Gandhiji gave at that time.

Sampurnanand: No.

Sharma: And Gandhiji must have spoken in Hindi at the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan?

Sampurnanand: Oh yes, of course.

Sharma: Was his Hindi good enough at that time?

Sampurnanand: Well, it was as good as it was at any other time. Anybody could easily understand him and the people really enjoyed his lapses, when there were any. Every-

body took it in a good humour.

Sharma: And after leaving Indore you went to Bikaner?

Sampurnanand: Yes, after three years' stay at Indore I went to Bikaner.

Sharma: Who were your colleagues, besides Banarasi Das Chaturvedi, at Indore?

Sampurnanand: I think, nobody has come to the limelight. There was Kanhaiyalal Varma, there were two or three Parsee gentlemen but nobody came into public life.

Sharma: When you were at Bikaner, was public life alive there?

Sampurnanand: Life was certainly more alive than it had been at Indore, because we were really approaching the modern times. Naturally the influence was there.

Sharma: How far did the political upheavals in the Britísh India influence you?

Sampurnanand: Even in a sleepy hollow like Bikaner, there were all sorts of reactions. For instance, there was Maharaj Bhairon Singh, His Highness Maharaja of Bikaner's cousin. He said: "The British Government are fools. Let me have the Government of India for one day and I will settle everything. All that you have to do is to hang on Gandhi, and everything would be all right. Build your people that kind also." Maharaja of Bikaner, of course, knew him better. He knew that his cousin was acting, speaking like a fool. Anyway he tolerated him.

There is another instance, I remember of the folly, of this cousin of Maharaja Ganga Singh. His Highness was in England. The ablest man among the ministers was the Home Minister Munshi Kamta Prasad. His Highness relied very much on him. Munshi Kamta Prasad was in Banaras, on leave. Then one day a telegram arrived from Sardarshahr. That was one of the districts of Bikaner in those days, that a rebellion had broken out at Sardarshahr and something had to be done about it at once. Nobody knew what to do. All the ministers at Bikaner lost their heads and above all, this Maharaj Bhairon Singh. All that anybody could think of was to send a company of the army. But suppose nothing had broken out, then they would all be fools in everybody's eyes and His Highness would be very angry. Then their collective wisdom came to this conclusion that though Munshi Kamta Prasad was on leave, yet he was expected back on the same day. So they decided to wait and take all the risk. They waited till evening. When he arrived, he was driving straight to the Secretariat from the station. After looking at the telegram for a moment, he said, "This is fake; there is nothing; and I am sure there has not been any rebellion. The District Magistrate must have known and then there are some Government of India offices, and they would know something about it; and that the name of the sender there is peculiar; Nicdur." He said this could be an Indian name; it was not an English name. Then he remembered that the Revenue Minister was an Englishman. He was on tour in that area. His name was Rudkin. This clearly looked as Nicdur

Rudkin, and then he remembered that this was first of April. So, he had been simply playing a joke with these people. He turned out to be right. When Nicdur came back the next day, he said 'Well, I was taking a risk but there it was, and I knew that you would be back from leave and you would understand the thingsd really and I was banking on this."

Sharma: Could you tell us now were the relations between the British Resident and the Native State government at Bikaner?

Sampurnanand: What do you mean exactly by relations?

Sharma: How were they pulling on with each other?

Sampurnanand: I think there was no trouble. Absolutely no trouble. You see; the annual session of the State Legislature took place. Editors of papers like the The Times of India, The Statesman, The Pioneer etc. were all invited to see this wonderful show and there was a good deal of show element; for instance you know the power of interpellation had not been given to the central legislature in Delhi. But His Highness had granted this right to his own legislature. He was very proud of it and he would proudly point this out to those European visitors: 'Just see, what great powers we have!' What happened was this. Some questions were dictated to certain members: "Please put these questions in the legislature. Then the Minister would give such and such reply; then you please put such and such further question" and all that. I had a good

deal to do with it. I had to prepare questions for them, then counter-questions. All that I had to do then. And they knew very well. In private, there were great bankers, Mohatas. They could tear this budget to tatters in five minutes. I cannot say anything more.

Sharma: So it was all pre-arranged.

Sampurnanand: All pre-arranged; everything pre-arranged. And I am certain that the Finance Minister did not understand even a word about what he was reading in his budget speech. Only two persons, members, connected with the government understood the budget speech, the Maharaja. and the Finance Minister. Nobody else. No member of the government, I am absolutely certain, did.

Sharma: Was Ganga Singh an efficient ruler that way?

Sampurnanand: Well, as efficient as any. There is no doubt about it.

Sharma: Was his understanding of administration sound?

Sampurnanand: Oh yes. And there is one thing that must be said to his credit. His speech, for instance, was prepared in English first of all by himself, then it passed through two other hands, his Private Secretary and the Home Minister. That was the final speech. Then the speech came to me and I translated it into Hindi. In the course of one night,

the whole thing had to be finished. It went to the Press; the proofs came to me and I had to see them. His Highness would not read in Hindi but in Marwari. Entirely off hand.

Sharma: What was his attitude towards political movements in his State?

Sampurnanand: There were hardly any political movements.

Sharma: Why did you leave Bikaner?

Sampurnanand: When I wrote my letter of resignation, I had nothing against the State itself. I wrote a letter and addressed this to His Highness: "You and I were in the British government. I intend to do public work and it is not possible to do public work and also remain in service. So I hope you will kindly let me go." According to the rules, I think, I should have given three months notice. But I requested the Mahraja: "Kindly waive this rule in my case", and he was good enough to do so.

Sharma: Was there any particular incident in the State which was responsible for your tendering the resignation?

Sampurnanand: No, nothing.

Sharma: Or was it because of the political movement that was going on?

Sampurnanand: I had made up my mind to join the Congress, when I was there.

Sharma: At this time, who were your close friends excepting Chand Karan Sarda and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi?

Sampurnanand: I do not think there was any.

Sharma: Could you tell us about Mr. Chand Karan Sarda?

Sampurnanand: Not much. You see, we were not close to each other. In fact, I had never met him before leaving Bikaner. Then he read somewhere or learnt somehow that I had made up my mind to leave Bikaner. So he wrote a letter to me saying that if I did not mind, I might come down and stay with him for a few days in Ajmer. So, after resigning my job I went to Ajmer. It was there that I met him and he tried to persuade me to settle down in Ajmer and join the public life. But I had decided to go to Banaras. In fact, his only solid contribution to my public life was this: that it was in Ajmer that I first purchased my khaddar clothing. That is all I can remember. There was often correspondence with him after my leaving Ajmer but that is all.

Sharma: Was Chand Karan Sarda an extremist at that time?

Sampurnanand: At least he seemed to be tending towards that from my first conversation.

Sharma: In Banaras, did you straightaway join the Kashi Vidyapith?

Sampurnanand: No, I came here in July and I joined the Kashi Vidyapith, I think in July next or nearabout.

Sharma: Did you write something till 1921?

Sampurnanand: Writing work I think I did. In fact I had done writing work even before that. My first book Dharma Vira Gandhi had been written earlier.

Sharma: In which year was it published?

Sampurnanand: I think it was published in 1914.

Sharma: Before Gandhiji came to India.

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: That was perhaps the first book on Gandhi in Hindi.

Sampurnanand: I can not tell you that. In any case it was my personal book that I know.

Sharma: Did you compose some poems also?

Sampurnanand: I think I wrote one poem.

Sharma: After that you did not compose any more.

Sampurnanand: I can not say that but none of them saw public press.

Sharma: What was the provocation to write a book on Gandhi in 1914?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: The movement in Africa and my friend there Garde just asked me to write something about Gandhiji because he was in everybody's mind at the time.

<u>Sharma</u>: In 1914?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Yes.

<u>Sharma</u>: He was very popular, you mean?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Oh yes, because the movement by Indians in Africa was popular.

<u>Sharma</u>: What was your first poem?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Some kind of a religious poem, a few lines.

<u>Sharma</u>: From the time when you passed your B.Sc., till the time you left Bikaner, did you do any other major writing work.

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: In a way I did some writing. I wrote a number of articles for some Hindi papers from Bikaner. It was a very risky business because somehow or other the State police had come to know that somebody from the State did write to some Hindi papers. They could not find out who it was and fortunately for me, there was a gentleman in the post office. The post office was the Government of India department, and he was very sympathetic. He took care, so to say, to seal whatever I wrote. So the thing never got into the hands of the police, but they suspected that somebody was doing it and I did, of course, write under an assumed name. Anyway, I did

manage to write to Calcutta Hindi papers. That was the only writing work I did. One thing more. In the meantime, I wrote two books in hindi, one on physics and the other on astronomy, both published by the Nagari Pracharni Sabha here.

Sharma: To which paper did you contribute your articles?

Sampurnanand: Mostly to the Bharat Mitra.

Sharma: What were the topics on which you wrote?

Sampurnanand: All kinds of political subjects mostly concerning states and so on.

Sharma: The internal administration.

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: How did you get interested in astronomy?

Sampurnanand: When I was a student of the B.Sc., I was a voracious reader. I read all kinds of subjects, nothing directly connected with my university curriculum, particularly miscellaneous science subjects, and one of the subjects in which I began to take interest was astronomy. I practically read all the books in the college library on astronomy. That is how I had gathered interest in the subject.

Sharma: So when did you join the Kashi Vidyapith?

Sampurnanand: In 1922.

<u>Sharma</u>: Before we come to your career in the Kashi Vidyapith, I would just like you to tell us about the politics in Banaras. Who were the local leaders?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Shri Shiv Prasad Gupta, Babu Bhagwan Das and Babu Sri Prakasa were, I should say, the most important persons.

<u>Sharma</u>: The first rank?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: The first rank, yes. Well, it all depends on what you mean by first rank. They were what you might call the social class. In the workers' rank there were other people. There were two clear stratum among the workers. One was the social class, the other was not exactly the social class.

<u>Sharma</u>: Who were they?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Shri Shiv Vinayak Misra, Dr. Abdul Karim, Babu Baijnath Singh and Prof. Ram Das Gaur.

<u>Sharma</u>: What was the attitude of the Hindus towards the Khilafat movement?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: It was difficult for an ordinary Hindu to enthuse over it. What were the rights and wrongs of it? Normally, the Hindu could not understand it, what was it all about? Politically, it seemed quite all right to speak for the Khilafat but what it was all about? But why this enthusiasm, people could not understand it.

Sharma: Do you think that when Gandhiji insisted on the Khilafat it was merely because of political reasons?

Sampurnanand: I do not know about Gandhiji. It is difficult to say how his mind worked, but it can be said that most Hindus did not understand this thing. They could not really enthuse over it as Muslims did. Babu Bhagwan Dasji once said so, "If I make a mistake, if I commit a folly, I am prepared to suffer for it. But I am not prepared to suffer for somebody else's folly."

Sharma: Under what circumstances were you arrested in 1921?

Sampurnanand: When the Prince of Wales was to come to Varanasi - this was one of the cities in U.P. apart from Lucknow and Allahabad which he was to visit - it was decided to issue a notice boycotting his visit. As Secretary of the District Congress Committee, I was one of the signatories to the notice. That is how the Government got hold of me.

Sharma: In one of your books you have mentioned that the notice that was printed for distribution, advocating the boycott of Prince of Wales was somehow leaked out to the District Magistrate. Could you tell us the name of the person who passed it on to the District Magistrate?

Sampurnanand: I cannot definitely say that somebody passed it on to the District Magistrate. That would mean that

somebody did it deliberately. I do not say that, but it did reach the District Magistrate that I had written there. The copies of the notice that was to be distributed happened to be stored for the time being at the Taj Press in the beginning and then they were at Bhagwan Das's place, and the District Magistrate, let us say, happened to reach Bhagwan Das's house and got hold of the copies.

Sharma: In which jail were you kept?

Sampurnanand: That year, in Banaras District jail.

Sharma: You got six months imprisonment.

Sampurnanand: Six months.

Sharma: Were you arrested before the Prince's arrival or after that?

Sampurnanand: Before the Prince's arrival.

Sharma: You were not able to see the warm welcome given to the Prince?

Sampurnanand: No.

Sharma: So, again you came out in July 1922.

Sampurnanand: About July.

Sharma: Later on, there was a controversy between Pro-changers and No-changers. What was your position in that controversy?

Sampurnanand: I was with Pro-changers.

Sharma: What was the position of men like Babu Shiv Prasad Gupta and others?

Sampurnanand: Babu Shiv Prasad was a No-changer.

Sharma: In 1923, you did not stand for the elections.

Sampurnanand: No.

Sharma: What did you teach at the Kashi Vidyapith?

Sampurnanand: My subject was philosophy mainly, and then there was also international law.

Sharma: Were you one of those who taught in government run institutions or who received government grants? Could you tell us what was the difference in the type of education given in government schools and the Kashi Vidyapith?

Sampurnanand: I do not think I was ever a teacher in any government school; but, of course, I was on the staff of one or two institutions which were receiving government grant. That is right. There was, first of all, the very great difference in the medium of instruction, that was evident in the mentality of the teachers and the taught, because at the Kashi Vidyapith we did not take any government grant, we could not take any government grant. Well, as a matter of fact, in the very beginning there were only two teachers in the Kashi Vidyapith who had been to prison. But even though people had not been to prison, they were of different mentality. They were Congressmen, they were imbued with the desire to go

the teaching - but in the teaching of history, of course, it made a good deal of difference. At every step there would be differences, at least in the teaching of Indian history.

Sharma: The interpretation of facts?

Sampurnanand: Yes. Not only the interpretation of facts, even the narration of facts. For instance, you know there has been a good deal of controversy, say about the black-hole tragedy. There are people who say that there never was any black hole tragedy but, of course, an Indian approaching Indian history from his point of view would give different facts. A number of battles, wars, and so on.

Sharma: So, you will permit me to say that the atmosphere was quite different from that in government institutions.

Sampurnanand: Oh, certainly.

Sharma: The service, readiness to court imprisonment for the country.

Sampurnanand: Yes, I have said in 1921, but in 1922, let us say, if not many, there were at least two teachers who had been to prison and among the students also there were some.

Sharma: Would you say that the standard of education in the Kashi Vidyapith was lower than in government schools?

Sampurnanand: You see there was one thing which we always kept in our minds and I think we always stuck to it. You know we had the Shastri degree and our endeavour always

was that the Shastri standard should be higher than the B.A. of the other universities and, perhaps, a little lower than that of M.A. That was the standard which we kept before our eyes.

Sharma: And it was so.

Sampurnanand: It was so. Certainly, it was so.

Sharma: What was the general level of their academic competence, of the students, who came after leaving their schools and colleges in the Non-cooperation movement?

Sampurnanand: Very good. In fact, we think that the earlier batch of students was, if anything, much better than the later ones, because generally the earlier students were among the better class of students who left the colleges on that basis.

Sharma: You had men like Chandra Shekhar Azad, Lal Bahadur Shastri, T.N. Singh and Algurai Shastri.

Sampurnanand: Yes, Lal Bahadur Shastri was there, T.N. Singh was there.

Sharma: Kamlapati Tripathi?

Sampurnanand: Kamlapati Tripathi was there.

Sharma: Rajaram Shastri?

Sampurnanand: Rajaram Shastri was there. In fact, most of our best students who were academically very good, came from the earlier batches.

Sharma: Earlier batches, the first or second batch?

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: Who were your colleagues in the Kashi Vidyapith at that time?

Sampurnanand: Narendra Devaji was there, and Sri Prakasaji was there. Yagya Narain Upadhyaya and Birbal Singh were also there.

Sharma: Kripalaniji had left?

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: After you came out of prison in 1922, till 1930, your next imprisonment, what was the nature of your political activities?

Sampurnanand: Well, I was on the staff of the Kashi Vidyapith and was doing just the work an ordinary Congressman did in those days. Nothing particular.

Sharma: Did you contest 1926 elections?

Sampurnanand: In 1926, I did.

Sharma: In the Congress work, what was your special aptitude?

Sampurnanand: I don't know, sometimes, I was the Secretary of one Congress Committee or the other. Sometimes I would be the President of the City Congress Committee, and at another time I would be the President of District Congress Committee.

Sharma: Did the membership of Congress increase during this period?

Sampurnanand: It varied. Sometimes it was very small; at other times it grew.

Sharma: Could you guess any reasons for this?

Sampurnanand: It all depended on a number of circumstances. The membership decreased when there was not much public enthusiasm. When, for instance, there was some source of excitement, things like Simon Commission, the membership would also go up.

Sharma: From which constituency did you stand in 1926?

Sampurnanand: Banaras. In those days the whole of Banaras was one.

Sharma: For the U.P. Legislative Assembly?

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: Who was your opponent?

Sampurnanand: I think there were two, one was Rai Todarmal and the other was Pandit Yogeshwar Shastri.

Sharma: And you won.

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: Do you remember the atmosphere in the city of Banaras on the arrival of the Simon Commission?

Sampurnanand: It was strongly anti-Simon and in fact something very interesting happened. The authorities committed a very great blunder and very serious consequences might have followed but fortunately it was the Shivratri day and everybody seemed to forget this. Mr. Mehta was the District Magistrate here. The Simon Commission came that very day. It so happened that some conversation was going on between District authorities and some other people. We managed to tap the conversation and we learnt all about it that the Simon Commission was coming on that day and where it would arrive and so on. So, what we did was this. The programme of the authorities was to receive the Simon Commission near the Cantonment station. We heard all about the programme and we arranged our own programme accordingly. For instance, it was to be taken along the ghats. There was a river front. I was incharge of the river front. Govind Malaviya was incharge of the railway side. The authorities were surprised when they were met at the river front. Anyway, there it was. Then what they did was this: that was a very great blunder committed by the district authorities, they took them via the Banaras Hindu University, though they did not visit the University, and then they brought them through the city. The District Magistrate thought that in the rush of the Shivratri day nobody would notice it, and they would be able to see the city. As they came to the city, somebody recognised that this was the Simon Commission and they were surrounded at least by

twenty thousand people, and they would have been crushed to death. So much was the excitement. One of the members of the committee, Babu Vishwanath Singh, was a Pehalwan himself, and suddenly he jumped into the crowd and he managed to save them. Had they stayed there for a few minutes they would have been crushed to death. He just almost grappled with the crowd and surrounded them like this and saved them. He was able to take them to their car.

Sharma: Otherwise?

Sampurnanand: They would have been dead. No doubt about it.

Sharma: What was the number of demonstrators?

Sampurnanand: There were no demonstrators. You see, it was the Shivratri day. On any Shivratri, you will find about a lakh of people come to worship Vishwanath, the whole crowd was there. There was no demonstration, everybody was a demonstrator.

Sharma: So, it was Vishvanath Singh's shrewdness.

Sampurnanand: Shrewdness, courage, call it what you like. He simply jumped into the crowd and we knew him, of course, He surrounded the Simon group and managed to take them to their car.

Sharma: Were there any arrests?

Sampurnanand: The District Magistrate committed another folly. He tried to strike one or two people. If this

Vishwanath Singh's action had not been successful, there might have been further unrest, the District Magistrate might have been dead because the police had slapped one or two people. Again a foolish act. There was practically no arrest. That again would have been a crowning folly, if there had been further arrests.

Sharma: In the 1930 movement when the salt satyagraha was started, what was your role in the organisation of demonstrations?

Sampurnanand: In those days, there was the high-sounding character of district dictator. So, I did the whole thing here, in my own Avadh district.

Sharma: There was no sea nearby, how was the salt prepared?

Sampurnanand: There was no sea but you could get salt otherwise. We got salt from a number of buildings, old buildings.

Sharma: How were you arrested?

Sampurnanand: There is a village on the other side of the river there. They arrested me there. I was directing the manufacture of salt there. After having organised the task fully in the city itself, I went over to see the thing myself in the district.

Sharma: How did they prepare the salt?

Sampurnanand: We took whatever contained salt and we dissolved the thing in water.

Sharma: Were you arrested on the spot?

Sampurnanand: On the spot, yes.

Sharma: Were you tried in jail or in court?

Sampurnanand: In jail.

Sharma: For how many months were you in jail?

Sampurnanand: I was sentenced to two years and six months imprisonment. I was not in jail all this period. That was the sentence. As a matter of fact, I came out of jail earlier; after the Gandhi Irwin Pact.

Sharma: How would you compare the response of the people towards this movement and that of 1921? Was it less because the Muslims had gone out of the Congress?

Sampurnanand: Let the Muslims go out, the number was much bigger and it was a better movement. The Muslims who had joined us were loafers, purely Khilafat batch, except a few.

Sharma: So, their leaving the Congress did not make any difference?

Sampurnanand: Yes, nothing. Not here. It might have been in some other provinces.

Sharma: In the city of Banaras it didn't?

Sampurnanand: Nothing.

Sharma: What was the response of women because they had started coming into the movement?

Sampurnanand: Similar to that of 1921, practically the same this time. There were a good many women.

Sharma: Do you remember some of the songs that became popular in the 1930 movement?

Sampurnanand: Just a few snatches here and there. There were a good many.

Sharma: Were they poems?

Sampurnanand: Mostly poems, but a few were fairly good. These could be called poems.

Sharma: Who were the composers?

Sampurnanand: I cannot remember the name of most of them.

Sharma: What was the role which the Kashi Vidyapith, as a national institution, played in 1930?

Sampurnanand: Not much.

Sharma: Were there any more teachers except you and Sri Prakasaji who were arrested in the 1930 movement?

Sampurnanand: In 1930 most of the teachers were arrested. In 1921, only two were arrested - Dharamvir and I.

Sharma: Yes, that is right. But in 1930 most of the teachers were arrested.

Sharma: Did some students also go to jail?

Sampurnanand: Yes, yes.

Sharma: The response from the students of the Kashi Vidyapith was very good.

Sampurnanand: Very good. In 1921, I believe, only one student, Chandra Dutt had responded.

Sharma: After the truce between Gandhiji and Lord Irwin, there was a feeling of discontentment among the Congress leaders that the peace terms were not favourable to the country. What was your attitude? Were you satisfied with the terms?

Sampurnanand: I can not tell you my response exactly.

Sharma: Could you tell us something about your trials of 1921 and 1930? How were you tried and where were you tried and how the proceedings went on?

Sampurnanand: The proceedings went on fairly smoothly. The trial on both occasions took place inside the prison; in the Banaras Central Prison in 1921 and in the Banaras District Jail in 1930. Then I was tried by the District Magistrate on both occasions.

Sharma: What was your role in the 1932 movement?

Sampurnanand: It was almost exactly a repetition of what took place in 1930. I was again called the District Dictator and I had some hand in organising things in the

beginning, but at a very early stage I was arrested and did not see practically the fun that took place later.

Sharma: How was the No-Rent Campaign organised in your district?

Sampurnanand: It was fairly successful, but it was more intense in Avadh district.

Sharma: Again you got six months' imprisonment?

Sampurnanand: In 1931, it totalled to about two years and six months. Of course, I did not remain in prison for all that time. Then, in 1932, I got a term of six months. I came out and after about a couple of months, I went in again. This time it was for one year.

Sharma: Did you write any book during 1932 imprisonment?

Sampurnanand: I do not think I did.

Sharma: No writing work in jail?

Sampurnanand: Not in 1930 or 1931, I do not think so.

Sharma: 1932?

Sampurnanand: One of my most important books Chidvilas, was produced in prison but I think it was in 1932 or thereabout.

Sharma: How would you compare your two jail terms in terms of amenities?

Sampurnanand: Practically the same.

Sharma: There were no hardships in 1921?

Sampurnanand: Personally, I have nothing to complain on the ground of any hardship.

Sharma: Were you provided with reading and writing material?

Sampurnanand: There was no provision for reading or writing, but there were practically all necessary facilities.

Sharma: You were given books for reading.

Sampurnanand: Yes, you could get books from home.

Sharma: In 1921, some people say, jail conditions were not good. There were no facilities.

Sampurnanand: I do not know. That was hardly my experience. I suppose a good deal depends on the personal equation of various parties concerned, the prisoner concerned as well as the jail authorities.

Sharma: What did you do after serving your jail term in 1932?

Sampurnanand: I did what the Congressmen used to do. We followed the usual routine, just the usual routine of Congress committees. There was not much enthusiasm in the country, that is a fact, but you had to do your duty.

Sharma: You were one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party.

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: That is right.

<u>Sharma</u>: Could you tell us what were the causes which gave rise to socialism in this country?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Well, to some extent it was the class composition of an average worker, particularly in certain parts of the country, say Uttar Pradesh; the workers belonged mostly to the lower middle class. It were the intellectuals who read and naturally formed certain opinions, and studied what was going on outside the country. So, naturally they were impressed. We tried to get hold of such literature as we could. Some of it was right, some of it was wrong. We could be right in our interpretation; we could be wrong also, but, in any case, there it was. The class composition of the workers was a good deal responsible for what happened.

<u>Sharma</u>: Men like Jayaprakash and others drew inspiration from Marxism, but in your case it was different. You drew inspiration from <u>Vedanta</u>, which to many of your generation did not contain socialism.

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: In a way it did, because, as I said, whether it was Jayaprakash or myself, we all came from the lower middle class. That, of course, accounted a good deal for our basic ideological foundations. They were there.

<u>Sharma</u>: You drew inspiration from what you call Vedantic socialism.

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: That is perfectly right, but socialism

was there all the same. Only it was coloured by Vedantism, if you like, but basically it was there.

Sharma: So, your own interest in socialism and also of other people,who formed the nucleus of the Congress Socialist Party, was because of their social position in society?

Sampurnanand: I think so. I have no doubt about it.

Sharma: During that time, what were the books that used to come from Russia or from other quarters?

Sampurnanand: A number of books came from those quarters. I would hardly be able to give you names of all of them.

Sharma: Do you recollect some of them which you might have read?

Sampurnanand: We avidly devoured all those books which came. They came to us and we had to pass them on to other hands. The Marxist classics were there, of course. We managed to get hold of them. There were a number of pamphlets of all kinds, English translations of pamphlets issued for workers in Russia, for instance. There were a number of them.

Sharma: What works of Marx did you study?

Sampurnanand: Certainly Das Kapital.

Sharma: We find that the concept of socialism and the need for a socialist party was growing in the minds of many young men of your generation, and they were to be found

in different parts of the country. Could you tell us how did they come together to form a socialist party?

Sampurnanand: It is interesting. For instance, I can tell you how we formed the nucleus of the Congress Socialist Party in Uttar Pradesh. Some six or seven of us met at my house one evening and some how or other they had formed the impression that I was the man who had studied socialism.

Sharma: When Subhas stood for the second time for the Congress presidency, what was the attitude of the Congress Socialist Party? Did they vote for Subhas Bose en bloc or was there free voting?

Sampurnanand: There was certainly free voting, but I believe the majority voted for him.

Sharma: And when Subhas, after he had been expelled from the Congress, came to Banaras and Lucknow, did he give the impression that he had been dealt with rather harshly? Was he particularly antagonistic towards the Congress leadership?

Sampurnanand: He did not go out of his way to express his antagonism towards the Congress leadership, but he would have been much more than human or much less than human if he had not felt that he had been unfairly treated.

Sharma: Did you have some conversation with him about it?

Sampurnanand: Yes. The first time he stayed with me for three or four days. The second time he did not stay with me;all the same we did meet.

Sharma: Could you recall some of those conversations?

Sampurnanand: I don't think I can.

Sharma: If men like you, who had voted for Subhas Bose,believed,that he had been harshly treated, why didn't you join his Forward Bloc?

Sampurnanand: As a matter of fact, the feeling that a man had been unfairly treated, would be to some extent a personal affair. It could not be entirely so but to some extent it was, but that was quite a different thing from joining a different party and leaving the Congress. That was quite a big step that most of us were not prepared to take.

Sharma: You were not prepared to go so far?

Sampurnanand: No.

Sharma: In 1937, when you were a minister in U.P., what was the attitude of the civil servants towards the ministry? Were they obstructive or cooperative or indifferent?

Sampurnanand: Except perhaps in the case of one or two, they were not particularly obstructive. A few of the younger men certainly seemed to welcome the change-over, they seemed to like us. They felt that they had got the real chance to do some work for the country. We saw that difference. In

the case of others, it was simply wait and see, just to some extent cynical but not obstructive.

Sharma: What about the Governor's attitude?

Sampurnanand: In the case of the Governor, it was surprisingly very good because Sir Harry Haig was a civilan and we somehow felt that on the whole he would be obstructive there. He was not obstructive. He had his own views, of course, in certain respect but on the whole his attitude was correct, we might say perfectly correct, and after retirement he wrote a very good article about the ministry in some English paper, I forget the name.

Sharma: You had an English civilian as Secretary of our Department.

Sampurnanand: Yes, yes.

Sharma: How was he particularly?

Sampurnanand: Nothing objectionable about him, fairly good. I had a very interesting tiff with the Governor himself, but on the whole, things passed off very well. It was a very interesting thing. You see in those days, the Governor had to nominate some members to the Executive Council of the Lucknow University. In the past also, I think it happened every fourth year, every time the Governor had been nominating some big talukdars. This time my predecessor, Pandit Pyare Lal Sharma, had suggested the names of three or four persons. The Governor accepted none of his recommendations and nominated four taluk-

dars as in the past. The next time my turn came and I made certain suggestions. As usual, the Governor turned down my suggestions and nominated three or four other people. This was just a little before budget time. I went to the Chief Minister, Pantji. I said: "It is certainly within the discretion of the Governor to nominate whomsoever he chooses. If the nominations of the Minister are to be turned down every time, it is no use sending the papers to me. Let the Governor have the thing direct, but there is one thing, recommending the budget to the legislature is entirely in my hands as a Minister. This time I am not going to recommend a single paisa for the Lucknow University, let the Governor do what he chooses." This was something the Governor had not expected. Pantji happened to visit the Governor in the course of a day or two. He told him that I had made up my mind not to recommend a single paisa for the Lucknow University. I also told Pantji: "Let the Governor find the money for the University himself, let him make his own recommendations and nominations. I have nothing to do with it." This upset the Governor very much. He did not know what to do. Then, he asked Pantji to request me to see him. I went to him. He said: "Well, I can understand your difficulty and your point of view. Let us strike upon an idea. For the present I can think of only one thing." One gentleman, Sir Bisheshar Nath Srivastava had died, fortunately I should say from the Governor's point of view. He said: "Now, this place is vacant and I shall nominate whomsoever you want in this place, and in future let us decide this question by mutual consultation."

Sampurnanand: There must have been a good many people. I think there were a good many people. After all Gandhiji was there himself.

Sharma: What happened at the meeting which took place at your residence about the formation of the Congress Socialist Party?

Sampurnanand: Yes, and in a way we formed the nucleus of the party. Kamalapati Tripathi was there, my brother Paripurnanand was there, Tarapada Bhattacharya was there. Who else?

Sharma: Mohan Lal Gautam?

Sampurnanand: Not there at that first meeting. We were the only persons who came from Banaras.

Sharma: Sri Prakasa?

Sampurnanand: No. I think we were four or five. And then, of course, Narendra Devaji and I often met at the Kashi Vidyapith. Sri Prakasaji met us and Mohan Lal Gautam would meet us at the meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee and so on. So that way, we came to recognise that we were a small group who thought more or less on similar lines on certain subjects. We came to recognise each other as socialists, so to say. Then, that was how the thing started. We came to know each other. We came to know the Bombay group much later.

Sharma: Bombay Group included Masani and Asoka Mehta?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: (M.R.) Masani, Asoka Mehta and Yusuf Meharally and so on.

<u>Sharma</u>: Purshottam ~~Das~~ Trikamdas also?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Yes, Purshottam Trikamdas. There was a man named (Charles) Mascarenhas.

<u>Sharma</u>: How did you communicate with the Bombay group?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: It so happened that Jayaprakash Narayan was the man who was known to Bombay group also because he was much more a travelling man than most of us. He happened to know them and then came the time of the first Conference of the Congress Socialist Party at the time of the Bombay Congress. We just happened to meet together at Readymoney Hall and a man like Jayaprakash, for instance, formed the channel of communication between us and the Bombay group. For many of us, it was the first meeting really at the time of the Bombay Congress.

<u>Sharma</u>: So, the first meeting was held in 1934?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Yes.

<u>Sharma</u>: What was the organisation of the party? Did it have provincial units?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: Yes, that is right. There were different units.

<u>Sharma</u>: Who headed the U.P. unit?

<u>Sampurnanand</u>: In a way it was like this. We had a

executive of the State Committee, and it was not one particular person who headed the party because, Narendra Devaji was also there, I was there, and other prominent members of the party like Chandra Bhanu Gupta, for some time, Mohan Lal Gautam were there. These were the leading men in the U.P. party.

Sharma: The organisational structure of the Congress Socialist Party was quite different from that of the Congress Party.

Sampurnanand: In what sense?

Sharma: In the sense that it had its President, and then the Working Committee.

Sampurnanand: In the Congress you mean.

Sharma: In the Congress Socialist Party, they had their own pattern, i.e. at the all India level they had a General-Secretary.

Sampurnanand: That is right.

Sharma: Why was the Soviet pattern followed?

Sampurnanand: Because we had read Russian literature and we took Russia so to say, as a sort of example. This thing naturally suggested itself.

Sharma: So, would you say that the Russian influence at the beginning was quite predominant?

Sampurnanand: It was as far as we knew it and understood it.

Sharma: And then after some time we find that the Congress Socialist Party started making united front with the communists.

Sampurnanand: For a short time, yes,there was that influence,but it did not last for long.

Sharma: It is said that men like Masani, Achyut Patwardhan and a few others, were opposed to such an alliance with the communists.

Sampurnanand: In fact,there were very few people who were wholeheartedly for an alliance with the communists. Among the non-communists, Jayaprakash probably was the one man who was most strongly in favour of an alliance with the communists. I don't think anybody else was so much keen for an alliance with the communists.

Sharma: Were you for it an against it?

Sampurnanand: Certainly against it, very strongly against it, as they were against me. In their papers from Russia which trickled down to us in India, they always referred to me as a Vedantic socialist.

Sharma: What was Jayaprakash's reason? He must have discussed all these things within the party. Was it merely strategical?

Sampurnanand: It was not merely strategical, but was because of his convictions.

Sharma: He felt that by aligning with the communists they could grow stronger.

Sampurnanand: And he was definitely, ideologically also, to some extent, inclined that way.

Sharma: Then it was better for him to join the Communist Party that way.

Sampurnanand: He did not go as far as that.

Sharma: He was midway between the socialists and the communists - wanted to strike some sort of an alliance with the communists?

Sampurnanand: Yes, as you can see from his book, for instance. Ideologically also, he was very much inclined that way. In fact, Mahatmaji was good enough to read some of my books. He read my writings and then he also read Jayaprakash's book.

Sharma: Why Socialism?

Sampurnanand: Yes, and he said: "Sampurnanand, there is something which I do not understand. I have read your book on socialism, Samajvad, and I have also read Jayaprakash's book. I find there is a good deal that is similar and yet not the same. I cannot spot the exact difference. Where is it? You seem to advocate practically the same measures which he does and yet somehow you do not say the same thing and do not speak the same language. What is the reason?" I said: "Mahatmaji, the thing is simple. You have read our books and you find that there is a good deal of similarity in practical details but ideologically there is a difference, philosophi-

cally there is a difference. Our concept of socialism springs, at least to a large extent, from two different sources and that is the difference. That is why you see the same sentence and yet not the samething." He said: "Now, I see to some extent, but why don't you do one thing. Write a book explaining the philosophical basis from which your socialism springs." I promised to do so. I did but somehow that just failed at the last moment. My book was there, Chidvilas, in which I had tried to sum up the philosophical basis of socialism. It went to him and then Jayaprakash's wife borrowed his copy from him. Before she could return it, he was dead.

Sharma: It is said there was a planned attempt at sabotaging the Congress Socialist Party by the communists, particularly in the South?

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: Could you tell us what tactics did they adopt to achieve their ends?

Sampurnanand: Well, the most important tactic was to infiltrate into the Congress Socialist Party.

Sharma: Infiltration was the only means or were there other means too?

Sampurnanand: Nothing. Infiltration was the only means, but as a part of their tactics of infiltration there was an attempt to discredit some of the members of the party,

myself for instance. There was a sort of concentrated attack on me.)

Sharma: What were the means of such attacks? Did they indulge in character assassination?

Sampurnanand: Not character assassination as such, only what you might call intellect assassination.

Sharma: They would lend colour to your political ideas?

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: And say that they are reactionaries or something like that?

Sampurnanand: Yes. No character assassination.

Sharma: How did the leadership in the Congress Socialist Party detect that they were trying to sabotage?

Sampurnanand: For a long time nobody did. It was only later that they came to this conclusion, round about the time of the Ramgarh Congress, almost.

Sharma: Even at the Lahore session of the Congress Socialist Party at which Masani presided, they had made a concentrated effort at capturing the party, either capturing it or wrecking it.

Sampurnanand: Capturing was easier probably because there were some members in the party itself who were more or less inclined that way.

Sharma: How did you come to know of this attempt?

Sampurnanand: Firstly, to some extent, they were against me, and naturally I was more alert.

Sharma: Who were the other people against whom they talked?

Sampurnanand: Hardly anybody else openly, hardly anybody else.

Sharma: Why particularly did they choose you?

Sampurnanand: Because I was the most outspoken amongst them. There were other people, Narendra Devaji, for instance. He was always, in a way, weak-kneed in dealing with them. He several times discussed this question with me. In many cases his opinions coincided with mine but he never openly expressed them. In this particular question of accepting offices, he was never difinitely against it, positively, and yet he never expressed himself that way. Similarly, in this case he was not a Vedantic socialist, but he was at the same time not so positively, what should I say, anti-spiritualist as so many others were, but he would never express himself openly that way. So, he was at least particularly on their side also.

Sharma: Was it due to his intellectual oscillation between different concepts or was he mild by nature?

Sampurnanand: Well, I do not know he was mild by nature, possibly, but I mean there was that intellectual

oscillation also, certainly. After all, he had deeply studied Buddhism and so on.

Sharma: And then, finally, the honeymoon between the socialists and the communists broke off?

Sampurnanand: It broke off, yes, and it was quite interesting. The resolution that was passed at Ramgarh was entirely drafted by me. I had influence in the Congress Socialist Party. I was not a member of the party but somehow the other members of the party had confidence in me and, shall I say, my brains. Anyway, it was given to me to draft the resolution on behalf of the party - the resolution that was finally passed at the session of the party at Ramgarh.

Sharma: After the leadership in the Congress Socialist Party came to know of these attempts on the part of the communists to sabotage the party, what was Jayaprakash's reaction?

Sampurnanand: Nothing, he simply broke off from them. That is all he did.

Sharma: That's all. He was not shocked any way or realised his mistake?

Sampurnanand: No. In a way the shock was never made public. And then this thing must be said about the Congress Socialist Party that ever since the party came into existence in 1934, it was a very well-knit party of good friends. Also some of us had met for the first time in Bombay,

as I told you about the Bombay group for instance, but we became very good friends, very good comrades in the real sense of the word, so that in spite of our differences, somehow or other we could not get away from one another very easily.

**Sharma:** In the spirit of a well-knit family, they overlooked one another's weaknesses?

**Sampurnanand:** Yes, that must be said to the credit of the members of the party. In fact, we were much better united, you might say, than some of our friends in the Congress and that spirit still exists among the members of the party who are still alive.

**Sharma:** The mutual regard?

**Sampurnanand:** Yes, that is there.

**Sharma:** At the time of the foundation of the Congress Socialist Party there were rumours about the reasons for its foundation. One was that the younger group was feeling restive and they were very much against the slow moves of the older leadership. The other was that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru instigated his socialist-minded comrades to form the Congress Socialist Party. You have told me that there may be some truth that the younger group was dissatisfied with the policies of the leadership, but Pandit Nehru instigating his colleagues to form the Congress Socialist Party is absolutely absurd. To what

and file felt. In such a small party it is difficult to say who formed the rank and file and who formed the leadership.

Sharma: So, that was the only difference. You wanted office acceptance, and the other people did not want it.

Sampurnanand: Yes. At least they said they did not want.

Sharma: But how is it that Acharya Narendra Devaji continued to be a member of the Congress Socialist Party as well as a member of the U.P. Assembly?

Sampurnanand: Because he never went out of the way to say it openly. That is one of the reasons why he and I often quarrelled.

Sharma: You left the party only because you were for office acceptance.

Sampurnanand: Yes, there was no other reason. This was the main thing.

Sharma: How was the Congress Socialist Party in the execution of its programme ?

Sampurnanand: But did the Congress Socialist Party, the poor thing, ever get a chance to implement any policies, so to say, except, I believe, on one occasion when as a Minister I moved a resolution in the U.P. legislature saying that the capitalism must be abolished and so on and so forth,

but all that was merely on paper. What else was there? What else could we do to implement our policies?

Sharma: Do you think, when you were Minister in 1937, you could influence the party policies?

Sampurnanand: Only in minor matters.

Sharma: Not in major matters?

Sampurnanand: No.

Sharma: Were you outvoted or you did not try?

Sampurnanand: The thing never came to voting.

Sharma: Keeping in view the overwhelming majority of the other party, you never tried.

Sampurnanand: The thing is this. In Uttar Pradesh, even the most rightist of the members were, to some extent, greater leftist than the leftists in other states. For instance, take an issue like zamindari abolition. The Uttar Pradesh Congress passed it long long ago and so many other things of this kind. Even when this question of the abolition of capitalism came there, there was no opposition from any member. The most rightist of members accepted it tamely, quietly.

Sharma: This brings me to the formation of the ministry in U.P. You must have gone through Maulana Azad's comments in his book India Wins Freedom on the alliance between

the Muslim League and the Congress. Would you throw some light from your personal knowledge on this episode?

Sampurnanand: What light can be thrown there? The thing is there. There is hardly any darkness about it. There was something which some people might call a bit shady. That is all.

Sharma: There is no, what is called, inside story?

Sampurnanand: The thing simply developed that way, that you can say. There was an alliance certainly. Then the alliance succeeded in the sense that it managed to get a number of members and as a result of it the Congress did get something like a swelled head and the alliance simply broke off. That is all. The Muslim League could say with some show of reason that they did not receive a very fair deal. They could say that. There is case for that.

Sharma: The Congress wanted a ministry which was ideologically well knit but if the ministry had members from the Muslim League, believing in the Muslim League programme and not in a common programme, there could be some difficulty. Was this the main reason for not adding Ministers from Muslim League or was it due to the reason you have just mentioned?

Sampurnanand: I will still say what I have said.

Sharma: That there was a certain amount of arrogance on the part of the Congress.

Sampurnanand: It was there. No doubt about it. The Congress leaders did display some arrogance. They were also human.

Sharma: As a Minister for Education what was your chief contribution towards education?

Sampurnanand: It is difficult for me to say. A number of new measures were brought in but that anybody in my place would have done.

Sharma: You had been a teacher. You knew the difficulties of the teaching staff.

Sampurnanand: That is right. There were difficulties of administration. So I think, probably, anybody in my place would have done that. I do not take much credit for it. There were certain reforms, of course, but I do not claim originality for them. The salaries of teachers were to some extent raised; there was a definite drive for literacy which succeeded, things of that kind; several new educational institutions were set up, the Psychological Bureau for instance.

Sharma: Did you try to implement Basic Education, for example?

Sampurnanad: Only to some extent, yes, and in fact in doing that I took a great risk. But anyway I did because

some people like Acharya Kripalani, for instance, did not like the new things, the innovations which I had introduced, and I knew they would speak against me to Mahatmaji, but I trusted him and I think the reforms that I introduced went through.

Sharma: Would you give some of your comments on the Basic Education as an educational philosophy?

Sampurnanand: Purely as a piece of educational philosophy, it is sound up to a certain extent, but that is all that I can say.

Sharma: What are the chief weaknesses in the whole thing?

Sampurnanand: Well, after all it seems to ignore the progress which education as a whole has undergone down the centuries. I do not believe that the methods which might be suitable for what you might call the lower standards, the lower classes, would be suitable, for instance, for higher classes and if some people try to speak of giving a basic education basis for psychological classes, I do not understand this. I think those people are simply talking through their heads. They had never been teachers. They don't understand the thing.

Sharma: What about the earn-and-learn part of it?

Sampurnanand: There was not much earn-and-learn part, and whatever it was, I always spoke very strongly against it.

I said: "It is the duty of society to spend whatever money it can for the education of the young. It is wrong, it is preposterous to ask young people to earn their way through education. It is wrong. It cannot be done. It is almost criminal."

Sharma: During your term of Ministership, how were the relations between the various Ministers and the Prime Minister?

Sampurnanand: It was a very fine band of friends. The U.P. never got such a nice comradely batch of ministers as we did then.

Sharma: Do you think that it was a tactical mistake for the Congress ministries to resign after the outbreak of the second world war?

Sampurnanand: Well, I do not know what else was possible. If people had cared to go on working in the ministry, the Congress would have been destroyed. I do not think it would have been possible. The only course open was to leave.

Sharma: Do you think it was a wise decision?

Sampurnanand: I think so, and morally it was good.

Sharma: After leaving the Ministry, did you take part in the individual satyagraha?

Sampurnanand: Of course, I did. What else could I do?

Sharma: How were you arrested in 1940?

Sampurnanand: In 1940, I got a notice, "Leave this city by two O'clock or three O'clock," something of that kind and, of course, I did not leave and they arrested me.

Sharma: You did not make any anti-war speech?

Sampurnanand: No.

Sharma: During four successive movements, 1920, 1930, 1932 and 1940, did some new leadership come up or the old leaders continued to dominate the political scene?

Sampurnanand: The people who had come to the top in 1921 remained there though they were also supplemented by some of the people who came in 1930-31. That is all.

Sharma: Incidentally, did you feel that non-violence had percolated to the masses?

Sampurnanand: I did not, because I was never one of those who had been staunch believers in the concept of non-violence. So I was simply interested in what you might call the practical aspect of non-violence. That was anough for me.

Sharma: As a policy?

Sampurnanand: Yes. Theoretically it is quite good, but for an ordinary man adherence to non-violence except as a policy is quite difficult. And so far as Mahatmaji was concerned, he quite understood the point of view of people like me and he accepted it. There is no doubt about it.

Sharma: Because he was not only an idealist but also a practical man.

Sampurnanand: That is right, that is perfectly right. In fact there was an interesting correspondence between him and me and I have still got the letters. Just after 1932, the Congress Working Committee had made certain changes in the "Declaration of Independence", which had been originally accepted, and Jayaprakash criticised this move of the Working Committee in a newspaper article. I also did so from a different angle. The two articles appeared in the press practically at the same time. Mahatmaji criticised both of them and there was one sentence in his press article where he said: "Persons like Jayaprakash and Sampurnanand will certainly have to lead the movement." He also said, "I was very much worried when people like these have doubts." Then I wrote a letter to him, saying: "It is very unseemly that I should carry on a newspaper correspondence with you. I am a small man after all, but I must make my doubts clear, particularly because of this particular sentence. You seem to have some kind of trust in me that I will have to be one

of those people who would have to lead the movement. For this reason I must make my position clear to you." In another sentence he wrote :xxxx "People like you should not have faith in khadi." I said: "Well, for my faith in khadi, let me make it clear. As you know,I call myself a socialist. I do not stand completely by things like the handloom and so on, but I believe in khadi as amatter of policy. I know, that at the time when the British came over to India, everybody in India wore khadi and yet we lost our independence. So we are as likely to lose independence now if we begin to wear khadi again as we lost then. But for so many years, khadi has become a sort of uniform with us and I should not like the Congressmen to give up khadi, at least till we achieve independence. I also believe that in a country like India, no matter what the number of mills may be, mills alone will not be able to find employment for everybody. Some kind of subsidiary employment we will have to find for most people and,I believe, that at the present time the handloom provides an easy source of employment for most people. That is where khadi comes in and that is about all the room which khadi has in my philosophic action. If you think that a man who believes in this will make your movement impure, I will leave your movement but there is nothing to prevent me from working for the country in other ways. I will keep myself engaged in the work for the country." Then he writes: "I have read your letter carefully. What you write is quite enough for me." So that kind of a man Mahatmaji was.

Sharma: Did khadi appear to you as a source of additional income for the underdog or was it an attack on the British policy towards our textile industry?

Sampurnanand: It was neither. It was simply that a large number of people should be given such daily employment as a means of filling their stomachs and this, to my mind, formed an easy method of finding subsidiary employment for these people. That is all.

Sharma: Not in the spirit of boycott of foreign cloth?

Sampurnanand: No. That was incidental. I mean to say, that is how matters stood between me and Mahatmaji.

Sharma: What part did you play in 1942?

Sampurnanand: I was not able to play any part because immediately I was arrested. I could hear accounts of what was happening outside but could not see anything.

Sharma: Of course, you did not see what actually happened, but later on, if I am not mistaken, you conducted an inquiry into the excesses of 1942.

Sampurnanand: Not exactly, but I had an inquiry instituted. I asked two gentlemen, two friends, to carry on the inquiry.

Sharma: Raghunath Singh was one.

Sampurnanand: And a Muslim gentleman Abdul Salim.

Sharma: So, from the information that you received through these friends, what were your conclusions of the character of 1942 movement?

Sampurnanand: There was plenty of violence, of course, on our side too. There is no doubt about that. Violence was in the air, violence was in people's minds. One could see violence, hear violence, smell violence in the songs that people sang. It was there.

Sharma: Do you think that the atrocities on the part of the people were in the same proportion as the British perpetrated on Indians?

Sampurnanand: Of course not. I have no doubt about that.

Sharma: Was there a certain amount of maliciousness towards Englishmen as a race?

Sampurnanand: Probably there was. I mean, it will not be against human nature to spread this kind of thing.

Sharma: In 1942, the violence on the part of the people was unparallelled in comparison to the last three movements conducted by Gandhiji. What were, in your opinion, the reasons for this? Was it because the leaders were in jail and there was nobody to guide the movement?

Sampurnanand: Yes, leaders were in jail and after all things were different. One could see the mentality of the

people. Somehow, I could see from our friends, peasants, for instance. Everybody felt that this was a sort of final war and that changed the character of everything. Our volunteers, people who had been to prison on previous occasions, even they felt that this was a sort of final war - Karo ya Maro - and all that had a peculiarly different atmosphere. Well, if a man feels that he is about to die, so to say, he develops a different sort of mentality altogether.

Sharma: Before dying he wishes to kill also.

Sampurnanand: Possibly. That might be a part of the mentality. Anyway, he would not be the same kind of sober, quiet man and so on. He becomes more human in the circumstances, he goes back to old Adam.

Sharma: For how long were you in jail this time?

Sampurnanand: I think till July 1945. All through.

Sharma: You came before the Working Committee was released?

Sampurnanand: Yes, on the same day. I was not with the Working Committee.

Sharma: You were put in Bareilly jail, perhaps.

Sampurnanand: From Banaras, I was transferred to Bareilly.

Sharma: After coming out from jail, what

difference did you find in the political atmosphere? Was it of depression or hopefulness? The movement had been crushed, it must have had some effect on the mentality of the people?

Sampurnanand: There was not much of depression. Only, of course, one could not say there was much of elevation. But there was hardly any depression. But, of course, it was clear that the attempt had failed anyway. There was that realisation of the patent fact.

Sharma: In your opinion, how far did this movement advance the advent of independence?

Sampurnanand: Well, it must have advanced the advent of indepdence, otherwise independence would not have come. After all it was not only we who counted. There were two sides, we and the British, and probably the British were more alive to what was happening than even we were.

Sharma: Do you think the formation of the Indian National Army had also to do a lot of things with the transfer of power?

Sampurnanand: Possibly. In any case there is no doubt that it must have affected the mentality of the British. They had never imagined probably that things in India would go as far as that. They did watch the changing mentality of the people but could never imagine, that openly an army fully enquipped with weapons would be set up in India, and they took time by the forelock, they were wise, they profited from what they saw.

Sharma: The Naval Mutiny and all that.

Sampurnanand: They could understand what things were coming to.

Sharma: What else did you do after coming out of jail?

Sampurnanand: I did just one work, was Secretary or President or member somewhere.

Sharma: After 1945, did the membership in your circle in ~~the~~ U.P. decrease or increase or was it stationary?

Sampurnanand: It increased for a short time. That was, so to say, some work had to be found for an average Congressman. So, some of us were supposed to be there and formed what you call the Congress Assembly. That was an assembly of Congressmen who had just come out of prison just to show that we were still active and not depressed.

Sharma: What work did they do?

Sampurnanand: No time for much work except getting together. For instance, to show the spirit that we could still meet, we should still meet even though the Congress was by name declared unlawful. We met under a different name. We met openly, publicly in a meeting.

Sharma: In 1946 there were elections, you were again elected to the U.P. Council?

Sampurnanand: Yes.

Sharma: Do you think, as some people say, that if in 1937 the rapprochement with the Muslim League had been successful, perhaps, men like Khaliquzzaman would not have been so pro-Pakistan?

Sampurnanand: Just possible. Human nature is a very complex thing. If, of course, he had been kept near the top, it is just possible. But this kind of talk sometimes succeeds. For some time he was in the Assembly. I once remember making a speech as a Minister. He had said something strongly against the Congress. Then I got up and said: "I refuse to believe that a man like Khaliquzzaman really voluntarily had made that kind of speech. I remember this and this, these are the movements in which he took part and it is impossible for me to believe that such a thing would have come out of him and so on." He simply hung down his head and said nothing. If he had been kept on the top, he might have acted differently. Once he came from Pakistan and had his dinner with me.

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